



# **SUCCESS STORY**

## **PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT OFFICE**

U. S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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### **UNION PACKAGING: CREATING QUALITY CONTAINERS AND QUALITY JOBS**

Mike Pearson, President and owner of Union Packaging, LLC (UP) in Yeadon, Pennsylvania, founded his business in 1999 with twelve employees and minimal sales. His vision was to create a minority-owned packaging company that understands and delivers top customer service and quality products. Today, UP has a diverse workforce of 85 people, with annual sales surpassing \$20 million.

Union Packaging manufactures folding cartons for the fast food restaurant industry. They utilize gravure, flexographic printing, and high speed converting to produce high quality packaging products. UP supplies several of the largest U.S. multinationals, including Burger King, Wendy's and McDonald's. Food is served across the country in clamshell, drink carrier, folded and nested cartons made by Union Packaging. .

Pearson received SBA assistance in 1996 through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) program. Consultants at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton SBDC reviewed his business plan and assisted him in making it a viable business model. Partially funded by the SBA, the SBDC's are a network of university-based centers that provide free management, consulting and technical assistance to small business owners in a variety of areas.

Pearson spent the next three years adapting his plan, finding partners, vendors, and potential customers to make his vision a reality. He followed his plan, increased sales, and developed a workforce. Pearson provides high paying jobs and skills to a workforce that consists of 80% minorities.

Union Packaging faced adversity in 2000 when their McDonald's contract was reduced. Despite the loss, UP continued to increase profits by improving their manufacturing process to reduce costs. They continue to develop greater customer diversity to increase UP's financial stability and growth potential.

Prior to founding UP, Pearson directed Westvaco's Consumer Packaging Division Pharmaceutical and Personal Care Team. Pearson also served in the military as a combat officer in the U.S. Army and is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania.

Pearson believes in giving back to the community. He volunteers his time and expertise to expand opportunities for minority business owners through his work with the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, Team Pennsylvania Foundation and the Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center. Pearson has also participated in Wendy's cross-country ride for the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption.

In 2005, Pearson was named the SBA's Small Business Person of the Year for Eastern Pennsylvania. The Small Business Person of the Year award is given to an individual who owns and operates a small business that has shown staying power, growth in number of employees, growth in sales and improved financial position of the business, demonstrated innovativeness of services offered, response to adversity, and has contributed to the community.

David C. Dickson, SBA's Philadelphia District Director stated, "It is always a pleasure to assist small businesses like Union Packaging enabling them to grow, hire people, and help the communities in which they operate."

The SBA is a federal agency chartered in 1953 to leverage capital access and to provide counseling and business assistance for America's entrepreneurs. To obtain additional information on SBA's programs and services, call (215) 580-2722 or visit the Philadelphia District Office's local website at [www.sba.gov/pa/phil](http://www.sba.gov/pa/phil)